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RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 0106
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
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SUBJECT: COLOMBIANS DISCUSS ENGAGEMENT WITH QAL-E-NOW PRT

¶1. (SBU) A senior Colombian military delegation led by Army Chief of Operations, Major General Matamoros, conducted a third fact-finding mission on Aug 12 and 13 to the Spanish-led PRT at Qal-e-Now in Badghis province. Five other senior Columbian military officials also attended, including Brigadier General Zapata Uribe, Army Chief of Training and Doctrine, as well as Colombian Police Brigadier General Caro Melendez, Chief of Counter Narcotics.

¶2. (SBU) Presentations during the visit focused on Spanish efforts and needs, and the link between narco-trafficking and the insurgency in Northern Badghis. The Spanish made presentations regarding the security situation in the province as well as their operational efforts and logistical capacities. Badghis Governor, Mohammad Ashraf Nasery, who has a counter-narcotics background and has visited Colombia, emphasized the problems caused by poppy cultivation and the link between narco-trafficking and the insurgency. Spanish PRT Commander, Col. Rolan, underlined the governor's comments, calling narco-trafficking the insurgency's "motor" in the province's northern districts. He also offered his assessment as to what military forces would be most useful in the province: doctors to perform medical civil affairs Programs (MEDCAPs); maneuver forces; combat engineers; tactical combat air patrol (TACP); and special forces.

¶3. (SBU) General Matamoros stated that Colombia is interested in assisting the international mission in Afghanistan, but emphasized this visit was a fact-finding mission and the specific nature of any assistance must still be evaluated. He offered de-mining activities as a possible Colombian engagement. The General also lowered expectations, saying there may be some political resistance to providing military assistance to Afghanistan as Colombia still faces an active insurgency.

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